THE PREACHER AND THE PASTOR.

TWO

DISCOURSES

DELIVERED IN

HARVARD CHURCH, CHARLESTOWN,

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 1840,

ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MINISTRY,

By GEORGE E. ELLIS.

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2 Timothy II. 2.

AND THE THINGS THAT THOU HAST HEARD OF ME AMONG MANY WITNESSES THE SAME COMMIT THOU TO FAITHFUL MEN, WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO.

That this solemn injunction of the Apostle Paul addressed to his youthful disciple, should be repeated on this day to a company of Christian worshippers is itself sufficient evidence of the divine sanction with which it was first uttered. The pure and vigorous stream of truth, which, at such a distance from its source, has lost nothing of its energy, must have sprung from a fountain of living water.

The Church of God in the world, is based upon Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being its chief corner stone. In the hearts of believers, its foundations are piety and virtue. Its standing argument to convince the gainsaying and the doubting, is the unbroken testimony of teachers and disciples contained in a body of historical records, among which the Epistles of Paul offer the most varied and cogent evidence. I have read to you a sentence of

that Apostle, one of the most impressive of all his instructions, in which are gathered together many of the pillars and grounds of our faith. As his life of Christian labor was about to close in the glory of martyrdom, we may believe that among the solemn thoughts which occupied his mind, that was not the least solemn, which concerned the dependance of the truth he had taught, upon the successive generations of its witnesses. He began a line of Christian teachers which should reach on unbroken to the gathering of the church in the kingdom of God. As his course was finished, he committ ed the truth to a faithful disciple with this injunction, that he should stand in his place, that he should follow in his steps, that he should preach and pray and exhort, should feed the church, should vindicate the truth, and when his labor was accomplished, should again commit the trust to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also.

After the passage of nearly eighteen centuries, the words of the Apostle, consecrated by the observance and the testimony of ages, find another appropriate occasion for their repetition. On the first Christian Sabbath which unites us as Pastor and People, my thoughts are seriously drawn to that venerable apostolic tradition. As I take the trust which comes to me through an unbroken line of Christian teachers, hallowed by the prayers and hopes of unnumbered souls, there is one word in the injunction that accompanies it, around which my

feelings and reflections all gather. That trust was to be committed only to *faithful* men, a single condition comprehending all others.

It is a common and an appropriate custom to devote an occasion like the present, to the application of the conditions of faithfulness to the several duties of the minister and of his flock, to solemnise a relation which originated in Christianity with all that the Book of Truth can afford of instruction and counsel. We may know the end from the beginning.— Whatever may be the length or the character of the present connexion, its whole course, whether cheering or disheartening, its termination, whether near or distant, will both alike be influenced by the frame and purposes of our hearts on this day. Leaving therefore all the mysteries of the future to the wise disposal of God, let it be our sincere desire to understand our several duties, and to enter upon them with an enlightened and a resolved purpose. Minister and people, the teacher and the taught, alike responsible in the eye of God, draw from their responsibility to him the measure of their obligations towards each other. I would bear in mind that while it is my privilege on this occasion to speak of myself, it is also my duty to exhibit to you how your trust is bound up with mine. Not of me alone will be asked in the day of account the fruits of this ministry. The sower and the soil both alike enter into the labor of the seed time, and share the glory or the shame of the harvest.

A convenient division of the subject which to-day claims our thoughts, is afforded us in the common distinction between the duties of a preacher and of a pastor. The preacher is the public expounder of religious truth—the pastor is the friend and counsellor of his flock. In the former relation the office of the minister may be considered in its obligations to Christ and to God—to the church and to the world—in the latter, to a circle of families and individuals, in whose homes and chambers he speaks the lessons, not of authority, but of sympathy and consolation.

Let me therefore occupy the present hour with a statement of the aspect which my office as a Christian preacher presents to me, as a place the condition of which is faithfulness—as a trust transmitted from the Apostles, to be perpetuated when ages shall have obliterated the temple in which we are assembled, and the memory of all of us who now worship within it.

The office of a Christian minister, though it has elements of an unchanging and stable character, is in some respects subject to the modifications of time and circumstance. The place which he fills, was filled before the birth of Christ—and many of the services which he discharges began to be needed in the first human society. The priests and seers of heathenism, the prophets of a divinely sanctioned faith, are his predecessors in addressing and instructing the soul of man, in providing for its necessities,

and in standing upon the line of its communication with God. As far as Christianity by its purity and dignity, its value and truth, is an improvement upon every form of heathenism and upon Judaism, so far does the Christian minister stand above his predecessors, in the necessity which his fellow men have for his aid and in the means and authority with which he dispenses it.

The unchanging and stable elements which enter into the office of a minister, are, the spirituality of the faith which he teaches, its dependance for argument and evidence upon testimony and history, his own sincerity, and his reliance upon the spirit of God while he enforces saving truth to man. These have been and are the perpetual characteristics of the office of the Christian teacher in all ages—alike in the Apostle and the Martyr, the Catholic and the Protestant, the Priest receiving the spirit from a Bishop, and the Puritan divine ordained by the laying on of the hands of the elders. The variable conditions which modify the office, originate in the civil, ecclesiastical, or popular institutions which may affect its duties and its privileges. There are then unchanging features in the office of a christian minister, and there are relations in which it is liable to be modified. It is important that we attend to this distinction, for two consequences follow from it, which I have time only to state without enlarging upon,—the independence of the christian ministry, and its permanency. Its independence, because as far as the office has sta-

ble and unchanging elements it is above human authority, while it is subject in some other respects to modifications of opinion and law. Its permanency, because as the office is subjected to the influences of time and circumstances, men may mistake an alteration in its outward variable conditions, for a surrender of its claims. The office depends not upon human authority for the truth which it teaches, though it may derive opportunities and aids for teaching truth, from human authority. The office is permanent in its intrinsic elements, though its aspect may change with social and intellectual progress. This distinction, let me once more remind you, (as I omit a further illustration of it) is based upon the fact, that the office of the Christian minister, possesses some conditions which are unchanging, and others which are subject to modification.— That after the revolutions of ages some of the most honored stations in society should be filled by Christian ministers, proves an inherent stability in their office. That during the same period this class of men should have felt the influence of political and social revolutions, such as the deprivation of temporal power, of civil support, of the charge of education, of superiority to the popular will, proves their office to be subject to modifications.

The work of the minister of religion in all ages, has been the teaching of truth from a sense of duty, for the promotion of human virtue and happiness.— The work of the Christian minister, independent of

civil, ecclesiastical or popular modifications, is to vindicate and illustrate the spiritual relations of man; to develope the affections, and to enforce the obligations of humanity ; to expound the evidences and to apply the lessons of the religion of Jesus Christ ; to purify life, and to brighten the gloom of death ; to aid men to know and obey God. Revolutions have shaken society to its centre, usurped power has been torn from the hands of the clergy, they have been pampered or persecuted, privileged or ridiculed, but still they have held on high, with an unfaltering arm, that tenure and sceptre of their office. So long as their office is to apply inspired truth to hearts that need it, their office is raised above violence or caprice.

Without detaining you to set forth any of those modifications which the office of the Christian minister has undergone, and may yet undergo, in perfect consistency with its divine original and its permanent influence, let me come at once to the conditions which the office presents now, in our own day, to all who enter upon it every where, and to me in this particular sphere. I will briefly set before you my own apprehensions of the authority, the duty and the value of the office, and of the measure of the superiority or the subjection of its exercise to public opinion.

1. What Authority has the Christian minister for the exercise of his office ? Ages ago this question would have been answered with perfect unanimity

with an answer very different from what it receives now. In some quarters it is still answered as I could not answer it. They who now discharge that office, whether young or old, come out from the mass of their fellow men, from the companions of their youth and education, and take one of the thousand places of usefulness, in society. They possess no Levitical authority from birth or descent. They may assert their divine commission from the apostolic succession, but as this matter admits of controversy, people will act by their judgement in believing the assertion. As far as all outward apparent circumstances are concerned, the Christian minister has no official authority independent of the truth which he teaches, and which so far follows his teaching with its sanctions. He appears in the streets in no way distinguishable from others. He meets in society his equals in dignity and power. He cannot utter a command, nor enforce even the best advice, otherwise than by its own recommendation. He has therefore no authority from descent or office. Something of privilege he enjoys by courtesy and voluntary respect. The Pagan Priest lost his authority when the mysteries of the oracle were exposed to vulgar eyes. The sons of Levi returned to an equality with the other tribes, when the distinctions of meats and holy places and days were abolished. Protestantism and Puritanism, Presbyterianism and Independency have left the Christian minister but a man, by denying ecclesiastical censures and absolu-

tion of sin, the communication of the spirit by the hand of a Bishop, and the interference of any man or any body of men with the religious concerns of others. And yet, if as we believe, the foundation upon which these ancient exercises of authority rested, was a foundation of falsehood, or of error permitted in temporary exigencies, the usurped prerogatives being swept away, the authority of truth is left, and this, whether much or little, is enough. While to civil office and to stations of trust and usefulness is now given the respect which belongs to an honored place, and the regard which is readily offered to faithfulness and uprightness in filling it, the authority stands partly in the trust, and partly in its honor, and partly in its discharge.— The authority of the ministerial office is based upon the divinity of the record which is its charter, and upon the zeal and heartiness and effect with which its light is transfused into the soul of man.— The teacher of divine truth for the promotion of human virtue and happiness, finds his authority offered to him in the message which he has to pronounce, and when he has faithfully and meekly discharged his errand, neither the proud nor the humble will deny that he has spoken as one having authority.— We all know what was the power of the clergy in ages past, and that it was exercised more over fleets and armies than over the human heart. The iron rod set within the golden crosier is now an image which recalls the exhausted tyranny of superstition,

not the memory of just authority denied and crushed. But perpetual truth offers a basis on which may be raised demands so reasonable that none may deny them, so sufficient in themselves as to need no power either to consecrate or to advance them. Such then is the present basis of the power of the Christian minister. His authority is found in the faithfulness with which he applies divine truth to the souls of men. Ecclesiastical usurpations and civil enactments might increase this authority, but they could not strengthen it. If the pulpit were overthrown and the minister silenced, there would still be places consecrated and lips opened with the authority of truth. All our inventions and devices to symbolise its lessons, and to invest with robes of office and titles of honor, those who declare them, may gather around religion associations of reverence, but we must learn to distinguish them from the perpetual authority of truth. I repeat that this authority transferred to the faithful and zealous teacher, is now the sole condition of ministerial power.

2. What is the appropriate vocation of the Christian minister; his Place and Duty? He studies and teaches, he prays and exhorts, he expounds the scriptures and imparts their various lessons to the erring and the doubting, the careless and the believing, the young and the old, the dying and the afflicted In so far as he thinks religion identical with goodness, he feels concerned in all the varied

interests and solemn occasions of life. His duties are accurately defined only by the largest estimate of the means and spirit of doing good. He is to lead on the virtue and spiritual growth of society, while others, in their own sphere, labor to bring knowledge and arts to perfection. As I am now chiefly referring to the vocation of a Christian minister, as a preacher, or public religious teacher, I should define more minutely the duty of the pulpit. It is the station from which by his own voluntary choice and the desire of those whom he addresses, the preacher seeks so to enforce the law and the love of God, and the truths of Christianity, that men may be made more good and more happy. There are certain appropriate subjects for him to treat, and there is an appropriate spirit and mode of treating them. The sacred volume before him, the study of his own heart, his experience of life, his knowledge of the world, will suggest to him his topics of address, and the sentiments of his prayers. His own equality with his hearers, his liability to common infirmities and prejudices, his desire to do the most good in the best way, and beside all these a regard to propriety and courtesy, must guide him to the spirit and mode of uttering himself. The work which has been done by faithful Christian preachers in all generations, is to be done now. The Law of God, as declared in nature, in human experience, and in the Scriptures, is to be mildly but seriously enforced from the pulpit, as of universal authority, as demanding rever-

ence in our hearts and lives, as the condition of earthly prosperity and of heavenly happiness. The doctrine and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as the Law for our spiritual life and the redemption of our souls, from sin and ruin, are to be set forth as first presented to man, with arguments and invitations, with kindness and cheerfulness, displaying the uncompromising demands of repentance and obedience as conditions, and the assurance of immortal life as the reward. God and Christ are the names which must sanctify every utterance from the pulpit.—Every lesson which is heard from this sacred place should illustrate the duties and purposes of life, for this is the appropriate vocation of the Christian preacher.

3. Let me next advert to the Influence of the Christian preacher, the value of his services and the appreciation made of them by society. I take the fact that ministers are educated, supported and esteemed, as evidence not only that they are needed, but that the necessity for them is acknowledged.—Scoffing and ridicule and unbelief, may brand them as a useless class, as the drones of society. To such statements, heard I am glad to say but very infrequently, and then from sources whose authority is not likely to be overestimated, the spirit of this occasion forbids me to make any reply. The whole experience of society and humanity has pronounced a different sentence. Christian teachers have not been set aside as incumbrances though there have

been several most opportune revolutions when this might have been accomplished. Astrologers and Alchemists have shared the fate decreed by utilitarianism and common sense, but the expansion of the human mind and social progress have continued to demand the aid of Christian teachers. I do not fear lest the world outgrow the necessity of them, lest human life shall cease to require their labors. Mark how the exigencies of society demand them; how, even where the law of a land makes provision for their education and maintenance, necessity, which is above law even doubles the number which the law provides. The splendid endowments of England give to the Church its thousand ministers, yet these are not enough, and the people with scanty means, but necessitous hearts, call out from the town academy, the village school, the pastor's study, and from the warehouse, the supply of the large deficiency. Yet some assert that a failing reverence for religion has lessened the power and esteem shared by the clergy. I do not believe that the power and esteem of the clergy, or the reverence for religion, have declined, except to outward appearance and as far as the progress of society and of truth, has lessened the influence of mere superstition, without abating by one tittle the necessity of a spiritual faith and the honorable estimation of its faithful preachers. The clergy do not now fill the places, nor perform the labors, nor discharge all the offices which they did when the high standard of

power and respect was established. Once they were politicians, moralists, school teachers and physicians, as well as ministers. The progress of society has parcelled out these several offices among men educated for the purpose. This has been a change of very modern date, I might almost say that the aged among us can well remember some of its stages, for not only the Jewish Prophet, the Christian Father and the Catholic Priest, but almost equally the Puritan Minister, were the masters of Law, Education and Medicine, as well as of Divinity. Those who now discharge the offices which formerly belonged to a Christian minister, in many important labors now co-operate with him, in inculcating truth, in doing good, and in promoting human happiness.

Nor would I admit a decline in the degree of influence which religion now exerts. The little experience which I have had of men and of the world has day by day strengthened my faith in the elevated position which religion holds in society, though I acknowledge the ground of this faith has gradually changed, not for a weaker but for a firmer foundation. For once I imagined that all who partook of the experiences of life and entered our churches, felt some degree of interest in religion and acknowledged its power. The indifference, the coldness, and more than all the insincerity, which I am forced to admit do abound, have led me to distrust this universal appearance of interest and reverence for Christianity. But by the same process my belief

in the absolute necessity of a spiritual faith, for every individual being, has more than filled the place of a mistaken confidence. I know that men have need of Christian truth—that the joys and sorrows of life, the relations which we all sustain, the mysteries which surround us all, the fears and hopes of all our hearts demand for us the lessons of Jesus Christ.—Good men acknowledge this necessity, the worst men feel it—and here is the foundation, eternal as the truth of God, of the influence of a Christian minister.

4. There is one more topic which requires a brief consideration, it is the degree to which a minister is subject or superior to public opinion, in the exercise of his office. The station which a minister occupies, is in form, though not in fact, a station of superiority to his fellow men. Certainly here is reason for mildness of judgement and expectation of censure, on his part. His opportunities of publicly uttering his opinions are so numerous that he must expect to be restricted by propriety, and criticised by those who may differ from him in spirit and in belief. I should fear that the influence of the ministerial office had wholly passed by if a people cared so little for what their minister should say, as never to differ in opinion as to its truth or propriety. Complaints have sometimes been uttered against ministers for the style and substance of their preaching, but it has seldom been the case that the liberty of the pulpit has been restricted, save upon

those subjects which, however near or distant may be their connexion with vital religious truths, have confessedly a very close relation to local and dividing interests. Such subjects are more apt to suggest the party struggles and the questionable disputes of the day than the discourses of him of whom the Prophet said, "He shall not strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." Rarely if ever has a minister been censured for the warmth or frequency with which he enforced the Christian duties of prayer and repentance. It is generally taken for granted by those who sit in the pews, that the individual who occupies the pulpit will be wholly right on those subjects, and they give him full liberty to insist, and enforce and urge. But there are other subjects sometimes introduced into the pulpit, and on certain occasions and with certain restrictions, demanding discussion in some of their relations, concerning which some who sit in the pews know more than does he who occupies the pulpit.—Most commonly too, each of these subjects has a newspaper and an almanac, books and courses of lectures, devoted to its discussion, and all who wish can thence derive a full knowledge. But when they are conscientiously introduced into the pulpit, I most readily admit a condition in the mode of treating them which whether it be or be not a surrender of independence, is but a regard of common decency, of Christian dignity. That condition is an admission on the part of the minister, that as he is

not now treating a subject drawn from books or from mere contemplation, but one with which his hearers are well acquainted, some of them much better acquainted than himself, it becomes him to regard honest differences of prevailing judgement and opinion, not to confound truth with the professed interpreter of it, nor to sacrifice his influence upon every subject by hazarding it all upon one.— Every thing may be said from the pulpit which ought to be said from it, without giving any offence even to a notorious sinner. But the words which on every other occasion are words of denunciation and bitterness, do not become words of love when uttered from a pulpit. I may be reminded that the Saviour on one or two occasions used harshness which gave offence. He did, but neither his authority to wound, nor his power to cure, belong to the preacher; they did not even belong to his first disciples, and with this difference between them, he more than once censured them for harsh judgement against others. An Apostle too having offended by his speech, apologised for it. Decency and good sense then, are, as I believe, the only restrictions which public opinion imposes upon the liberty of the pulpit.

In the modifications of which the ministerial office has from time to time been the subject, it has felt the influence of extremes in the degree of its dependence on opinion. Once the office stood above the sceptre of the monarch and again it has been

much within the control of popular caprice, ingratitude and censure. There is at present, to my knowledge, no unjust view entertained concerning the rights of the office, except a feeling frequently expressed, but entertained more generally than it is uttered, that the support of the Christian ministry is to be ranked among the charities of a Christian community: that the services of a preacher are accepted, not required, rewarded, not remunerated; that as he is listened to by courtesy, he is supported by bounty. So far am I from asserting this feeling to be a general one that I should resent the imputation if any one were to attach it to our community, in which ministers, most of all, have reason to extol the generous and even lavish kindness, which exceeds their labors and their infirmities. Indeed I believe that the impression which ranks the support of the ministry among the charities of life, has been strengthened, if not created, by the large and wholly gratuitous gifts which heap obligations of gratitude upon the clergy as a class. But to this impression whether it be confined to few or extend to many, is to be traced an opinion which sometimes utters itself, that among the many reasons why a minister should be discreet and cautious, one is that he is dependent upon those whom he may offend.—Even this opinion will not be wholly slighted by a judicious man, and perhaps it is but a fair offset to a delusion which sometimes attaches to the overzealous minister, that independent truth makes its

teacher independent likewise. I think that all that can be wisely said upon this subject has been said, when a minister has testified his knowledge of the fact, that there are some who look upon him as heard by courtesy and supported by charity. As he is most interested to dispel the error, he has the best means of dispelling it, by equalling in his speech the courtesy of his hearer, and by deserving the charity, if it be charity, which he receives.

The definition of the word minister, is servant; the minister serves others, but not with a service for which he is prepared without cost, or may discharge without labor. Surely the fact that of the three learned professions, an individual chooses the ministry, and devotes his time and his means, and selects his library and dedicates his life to usefulness in that office, this fact alone does not constitute him a recipient of charity. Still I say as he is most interested to disprove the fancy, he is best able to disprove it. The minister does depend upon the kindness, the good will, the reasonable desires of the people. If he cannot make them feel the value of his services, he must expect that they will think their reward gratuitous. And as for diversities of opinion our own are not honest if we cannot regard those of others. The best proof that a man has a conscience, is, that he respects the consciences of others. It will require only a moderate degree of discretion in a minister to distinguish between the reasonable and unreasonable demands which are

made upon him. They have but a miserable opinion of his office who while they consider him a recipient of charity, expect him to select the topics of his discourses, and to soften his assertions and to conceal his honest convictions, so that he may not offend those who do him favors. I would sum up all that I have said concerning the independence of a minister in a single sentence. The minister, as a member of society and as not infallible, is bound to declare with courtesy all his opinions on subjects connected with the moral and religious interests of men. Propriety and good sense will suggest to him that he regard the honest opinions of others, and the reflection that men esteem him only for his work's sake, should lead him, so far to wink at the patronising pretensions of a few, as to multiply the claims of his office on their charity and esteem. As defined within the limits of these conditions the pulpit is dependent, as is the conversation in the social circle, and the debate in the hall of legislation, upon the courtesies and decencies of society. Beyond these conditions the minister has no further obligations to man. His conscience now must be his guide—the truth of God must be his standard.

I have thus very imperfectly defined the authority and duty, the influence and the independence of the Christian Minister, as a Preacher, in his relations to God and Christ, to the Church and to the world. I have said nothing of the trials and dangers of the office, for trials and dangers are the com-

mon lot, and if those of a Christian Minister are peculiar, he has peculiar resources to meet them.— Nor have I enumerated the solemn responsibilities which attach to this office, for an attempt to specify them all would be in vain, nor could the obligation of any one of them be made to appear in words so imposing as is the sense of it, in the depths of the heart, under the searching eye of God. But I would not wholly omit the mention of the privileges and pleasures of this office. It is an office to be coveted for its consecration of time and talent, of study and thought, to the best good of men. It is an office to be coveted for the honorable estimation and confidence which are so readily extended to its faithful and laborious discharge. It is an office to be coveted, because it has been filled by a long succession of Apostles and Martyrs and Philanthropists, whose prayers have been accepted and whose labors have been blessed. The improvement of our own minds by study and thought is perhaps to be placed first upon the list of the means of unalloyed happiness which life presents to us. This is the enjoyment of a minister in his study, with the wisdom of ages piled around him. But this enjoyment loses all its selfishness and expands into a fuller sense of pleasure, when the results of individual thought and study are to be turned to the welfare of others.— The privileges of this office are many and great,— more to be felt than told ; but were I to enumerate them all, I should be led back again to those re-

sponsibilities which they enforce, for here as elsewhere, if much is given, much is required.

Is the office, the conditions and relations of which I have now set before you, estimated as its importance and sanctity demand, in your own hearts ?— If so, you will understand me to have spoken only of the humble instrumentality of a human agent between the everlasting truth of God and your own souls. I have left much unsaid which it has been in my thoughts to utter. I leave it to you to draw out the line of your duty by the side of mine.

Not without much reflection and some misgiving and distrust have I assumed that office which, amid the excitements and the inquiries of the present day, brings with it peculiar labors and peculiar responsibilities. Solemn as are its obligations, they may be discharged, if the purposes and prayers, both of minister and people, are centered upon them.

It further remains for us to consider the more private and intimate relations of our connexion.

THE RELATIONS OF PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

THE RELATIONS OF PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

Acts xx. 28.

TAKE HEED THEREFORE UNTO YOURSELVES, AND TO ALL THE FLOCK, OVER THE WHICH THE HOLY GHOST HATH MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO FEED THE CHURCH OF THE LORD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.

I spoke to you in the morning upon the relations and conditions of that part of my office which consists in the transmission of religious truth and the teaching of it from the pulpit for the improvement and happiness of human souls. We were then led to consider the relations of the Christian minister, as a preacher, to the church and to the world. A sphere of more private duty now demands our consideration, in the parochial relations of a minister, as the pastor of a flock, the social friend, the every day companion, of a particular community of Christians. Let me now ask your attention, while I endeavor to set forth the mutual obligations and duties of Pastor and People.

As we think upon the relation which now exists between us, the first natural suggestion is, that

our relation is voluntarily assumed. We enter upon it and continue it freely. No hereditary owner of the land around us has presented me with the incumbency of this parish, nor obliged you to accede to his appointment. No civil enactment, as formerly was the case, can continue our connection if it should be desirable that it should be dissolved.—Here then is free room for the connection between us to be one of mutual interest. As the law does not bind us, there is the more reason that the heart should. What follows from this freedom but that the holier and kindlier obligations of a fraternity of feeling in the best of all works, should be the sanction and the bond, as it is the object of our sacred connection. Untrammeled by any authority but that of conscientious duty, we propose to enjoy the mutual blessings of Christian counsel and sympathy, to extend and deepen in our hearts the faith and virtues which Christianity proposes to the little circles of its disciples. I believe that the greatest good which can follow the exercise of the pastoral office is consequent upon that perfect freedom from extraneous control, which enables pastor and people to estimate their common obligations solely with a view to the real value of them for promoting true happiness. Men do not now choose a Pastor as a matter of course, nor fall under the influences of his office, as they do under the laws of the land, without any exercise of their own will. Any one who so wishes, may, without suffering any thing in public esti-

mation, sever himself altogether from Christian fellowship and ministerial influences. And with equal freedom will the measure of your interest in the offices of a Pastor, be proportioned to your estimation of the value of his duties.

This leads me to express the second suggestion in relation to our connection as Pastor and People—it is a connection which has no formal and definite terms of individual duty. In the place of such terms, and far better than such terms, is our mutual understanding, not expressed, but recognised, that we know our appropriate duties and the obligation of conscience to discharge them. In the ancient church the duty of a Pastor was performed by the monthly or annual absolution after confession, by the administration of the consecrated wafer to the dying, and by the mass offered for the deliverance of a departed soul from the pains of purgatory. In the towns and villages where our lot has fallen to us as the successors of venerated Christian forefathers, the pastoral office was a union of petty oversights, of tyrannical supervision, and of almost ritual requirements with an earnest spirit of Apostolic labor. Then the Pastor could censure by the fireside those who escaped the rebukes of the pulpit by absence from the church ; he could enforce religious observances by legal penalties, and deprive of the vote of a citizen whoever did not regard the duties of family worship. He shared with parents the charge of every household ; he decided the terms of

admission to the Lord's Supper, by the method and exactitude of private religious experience; and he wrote out the code of speculative articles of faith, a signature to which was essential to salvation. The tyranny and the hypocrisy, the bigotry and the error, the evil and the good, of that unwarrantable system have silently passed away from most if not all of our churches. Such a system was but one of those various modifications of an office which possesses other unchanging and stable elements. Now the prominent idea which attaches to the exercise of the pastoral office is that it shall be without noise or form. Instead of there being a standard of expectation and contract, there has sprung up a belief that the duty of a Pastor cannot be defined, nor the wishes of a people expressed. The good expected from the office is unmeasured. The heart is the sole judge, recognised on both sides. All that there was of trivial and rigid conditions promised by both parties and expected by either, is now merged in that illimitable confidence, which trusts that in the exercise of a consecrated office the spirit of faithfulness will suggest, rather than require to know, how much is enjoined, and how much may be accomplished.

What then is left to the Pastoral Office, if the formal and compulsory relations once connected with it are wholly taken away? That which remains to it is what has always been its better part, which relieved the formality and made amends for the re-

strictions that fettered it. The power of religious friendship, of sympathy with all, of counsel kindly given when desired, of advice judiciously extended without intrusion, and thus only when asked, of rebuke without insult, of a word of caution dropped here and there without a sting—this is all that remains of an office, which as described by those who have written upon it for successive ages, has possessed a large measure of awe and influence. Perhaps it has been at times the most feared and always the most influential of any office ever exercised amongst men. That which remains to it now, is the residue of long tried and enduring truth.—The whole wisdom of Christian communities has for ages been attesting the fact that the religious obligations and experience of an individual are the solemn secrets of his own heart. Only Friendship and Sympathy can come near to them. Upon this wise admission the Pastoral Office must now base its utility and its authority. The Pastor is the Christian Friend of his flock, one to whom they may look always for sympathy, but of whom they must ask, when they need, advice, for he has no authority to proffer it. There is a delicacy in the discharge of the office under its present aspect, which demands mutual confidence, a respectful regard of private feelings, and a cautious dealing with the retiring sensibilities of the soul. The idea of the office is thus ennobled while its judicious exercise is rendered very difficult. If my duty was to go from house to

house resolving cases of conscience, exciting a certain temperature of doctrinal faith, and insisting upon a certain measure of outward obedience to religious formularies, I should know what was expected, and however little heart or confidence I might have in such labors, I should at least understand them and be aware whether I was executing them. But the idea of the good now dependant upon the office is distinct and dignified, while the degrees and means of realising it are largely affected by human infirmities. I would not illustrate this statement by specifying any particulars of its application. I will only repeat it again in its general reference to both Pastor and People. The Pastor is the Christian friend of his flock. All of them must be sure at all times of his sympathy, unasked, but must not expect the interference of his counsel or advice, unless they so prepare themselves and him, that he do not intrude upon private feelings, nor suppose a difficulty where there is none, nor meet with a cold repulse where his purpose was kind. Most surely is it the duty of the Pastor to be ever ready to quiet religious doubts, to soothe irritations, to comfort the tried, to cheer the lonely, to confirm the distrustful, to disturb the dangerous confidence of the irreligious. But it is not enough that he see where he may do good, unless those for whom he would do it relieve him from all uncertainty as to the reception which an intended kindness shall meet.

Having thus stated the indefinite but exalted stan-

dard of good influence which is now expected from a Pastor in the place of the methodical and formal standard of ancient times, it is right that I should qualify it by some of those particular conditions for its attainment which may be overlooked.

The relation between Pastor and People is not one in which all the duties are upon his side. The relation is peculiar, and there is no parallel by which to estimate it. Indeed I may say that the minute and exact conditions annexed, in our community and its neighborhood to the pastoral office, are doubly peculiar. It is by no means an unusual thing among the churches of all denominations in England, for the minister to be unacquainted with the homes, and even the names, of many of those to whom he preaches from Sabbath to Sabbath, though that portion of the society with whom he is acquainted, enjoy and value the pastoral office as much as ourselves. That in the minutiæ and variety of the functions associated with it by ourselves, there should be some ground of caution is very natural.—Some of the privileges which as individuals you most prize, are, to select your own society; to choose your friends and intimacies with reference to your individual tastes; to consider yourselves when in your own houses as your own masters; to cherish your private opinions without being called in question by your neighbors. How is it with the Pastor of a Parish in these respects? He finds himself placed over a society gathered in general by another in-

dividual, and sharing various tastes, habits and opinions, and it is expected that his talismanic power of doing good shall turn all that it touches into gold. He is the individual concerning whom all may converse, whom they may criticise and call in question for his opinions. He must be in his place if others are not in theirs. Now I fully believe that all these seeds of annoyance have but little life, till the Pastor himself begins to nurture them, and to bring them into experimental processes. Here and there an unreasonable man may demand of another what he would not yield himself, but in general, subjects of anxiety are of no longer continuance than is proportioned to their importance. Therefore as he whose name is upon many lips, whose time is claimed by many minds, cannot escape criticism, he must find comfort enough in that which is kind, to compensate for that which gives him pain.

There are some influences which deeply affect the cheerfulness and temper of a Pastor, and though I know they are often thought of, I do not remember ever to have met with a discussion, or even with a casual mention of them. In a community where several sects are represented by their own ministers, societies and churches, and where there is friendly intercourse between them, comparisons are instituted, tales are carried about, and men moulded in different statures, are measured together.— There are some to take offence at the quietness, and others to complain of the action of their minister in

reference to any topic which may appear of prominent, though of temporary, interest. In the long issue, the minister, if he be guided by conscientiousness and faithfulness, will at least be placed above the suspicion of lukewarmness and worldliness, but before he may establish a character, his peace of mind may be at the sport of much unkind remark.—Even lukewarmness and indifference are far preferable to hypocrisy. Only that interest and devotion will be naturally displayed by a minister, or by any other individual, which he exhibits spontaneously, without any of the provocatives of censorious comparison. I should say then that the first condition growing out of the mutual obligations of Pastor and People, was a liberal respect for every private opinion and action. Allow him, who before the congregation, has dedicated his life to doing good, the liberty of making his labor natural and cheerful to himself. Remember that in the delicate relations sustained by a Pastor he is dependent upon kind constructions, upon a generous regard of his feelings. His heart must be in his work if his work is to be well done. Do not then cause him to close up his heart lest it should be exposed to unkindness in the interpretation of its motives or purposes.

We are all of us dependent for our peace of mind and for cheerfulness in the discharge of our duties, upon a kind construction of our motives. Our peculiarities of taste and temperament and thought, should be above censure when they do harm to no one.

And when you reflect upon the great variety of opinion which must prevail, even in a single parish, you will see cause for a candid allowance of every honest difference. Advice and counsel I shall always value, but they that give it must consider, that perhaps no two of them may give the same.

Let me next remind you that you are not to look to me for all the aid which you may need in your religious education. If I had had time to trace out some of the various ways in which the ministerial office is modified by time and circumstances, I should have insisted much upon those innumerable aids, wholly independent of the labor of the minister, which all classes of society now enjoy for strengthening, enlightening and verifying their religious faith, for confirming and exemplifying Christian principles. I believe that the pursuit of truth in all departments of science, of government, and of social intercourse, is friendly to the interests of a spiritual religion. I believe that social life is continually enforcing the cogency of those lessons, which it is the duty of the minister to teach. I believe that every individual has in his own heart and in his own experience such vivid illustrations of the necessity of religious principle and trust, that when he is himself really interested in spiritual truth, a minister becomes to him but a secondary aid. Certainly as far as a knowledge of the history of Christianity and the interpretation of the scriptures is concerned, there is abundant help, not to supersede

the labors of the Pastor, but to give to every individual other resources for his instruction and dependence. The watchmen were to keep the walls of a city, but the people within were bound to defend themselves.

And here is an appropriate opportunity for me to express my sense of the importance and value of a co-operation with the Pastor, on the part of those whose inclinations and whose good purposes prompt them to enter into his labors. It is a joy, the measure of which only a Pastor can realise, to know that among his flock are some who feel above others the value of his office, and willingly rank themselves in the nearest circle around him; who do not fear to enter the chamber of sickness, that they may bring cheerfulness and light to the suffering ; who know the wants and sorrows of the poor, so that no single humble soul may mourn in solitude ; who are ready to give their time and their hearts to the best good of the young, and who gladden a social meeting by the pleasant union of a fireside enjoyment with a Christian charity. There can no charm be found for the exhaustion and depression of spirits, attendant upon unintermitted labors in the study, so effectual to cheer the heart of a Pastor, as the discreet and zealous interest which some of his society may take in sharing his labors. No other inducement had greater weight with me in placing me where I now am, than my knowledge, not only of the general interest felt by this society for Christian truth

and Christian institutions, but of the willing and fruitful toil shared by many in labors, from which some might excuse themselves, by assigning them all to me.

Especially do I value this aid in the religious education of the young. I speak to parents, and to those whose leisure and abilities permit them to devote some portion of their time to the religious instruction of children. If you would have that highest of all obligations faithfully discharged, you will labor with me. When I look around upon the large multitude of the old and young, who worship in this church, it is only the confident belief that the sympathies and co-operation of many will sustain me, that bears up my courage to undertake my work. I will not urge your duty in this respect, because I know that you have heretofore been faithful to it, and even in the little intercourse which I have as yet had with you, I have witnessed the proofs of a living and well-instructed interest, in a cause which I would lead, solely on the condition that you would follow.

Long prevailing custom and the essential propriety of the service, have made it the duty of the Pastor to appear in the private dwelling, on occasions of peculiar anxiety and affliction. The opportunities then offered to him, for performing valuable and acceptable service, may be productive of infinite good. Those are the occasions when true feeling is tested, and when the sorrowing heart acknowled-

ges, either the power of religious counsel, or the worthlessness of all other. The tones and sentiments which have been associated with the darkened chamber of the dying and the first bursting anguish of afflicted love, when heard from the pulpit, have acquired additional solemnity and impressiveness. The Pastor addresses both the hearts and the minds of only those in the congregation who have found him faithful in their private trials. I would not diminish in the slightest degree the common standard of good which is expected to be accomplished by the Pastor when he appears amid an afflicted household. His errand is of love; his work is merciful; his words are spoken with a grave open before him, his sincerity is tested by a spirit lingering and hovering between time and eternity. His office then, if faithfully discharged, must be one of infinite good. It comes up before me as an office in which, though I have had but little experience, I do have unlimited trust. Yet I should not deal honestly with you did I not freely declare my conviction that there are over-estimates and unreasonable expectations associated with that office. It has been displaced from its due position in the line of sanctifying means, and has led to an undervaluing of the other labors of the minister. The Pastoral Office has felt the most of an influence which it should have been superior to. I mean by this assertion, that many people are wont to expect every thing of their Pastor on critical occasions. They

sometimes forget that in his weekly services he has been laboring to prepare them for their trials, that he has endeavoured to turn the light of religious counsel upon the common round of life's experiences. He has asked in his prayers for them that the love of God, and the prosperity which follows them year after year, may plant a constant faith in cheerful hearts. He tells them that through some tribulation each must test his faith. The Sabbath is consecrated, the Bible is read, the solemn tones of the organ accompany the voice of praise, and the lessons of religion are spoken, that all time may be hallowed, and that every sound and lesson addressed to mortal senses may bear a holy meaning. Often the sorrows of one household are remembered in the congregation, and no occasion of public worship has been duly improved, when the coming hour of trial has not been anticipated in prayer, and in the preparation of spirit. Now if the whole course of your religious life is thus made to take its character from the possible extremities of your private experience, is it right for any of you to begin to seek in those extremities for the spirit which you should bear with you along the ordinary tenor of your days? Do you educate your child with a knowledge and a caution of all the duties and temptations of life, with the expectation that he will call you to advise him in every emergency, as if he had encountered a trial for which you had not prepared him?

It seems to me, therefore, that I do right, while

admitting the infinite good of which a Pastor may be the instrument on occasions of anxiety and affliction, to suggest to your remembrance the ordinary and constant labors by which he endeavors to prepare you for such occasions. It is in the midst of such his ordinary and constant labors, that the Pastor hears that the trials and griefs of which he has spoken and prayed so often, have fallen upon this or that household. He goes thither meditating upon the fulfilment of his warnings, that trial and grief are the appointed discipline of humanity. He resolves never to omit them in the service of the sanctuary, never so to speak of life, as to forget death, never so to gild the prosperity of man's probation, that adversity shall startle a sufferer with fear or doubt. But when he enters that household and communes with the afflicted, his frame of mind in meeting them will surely be affected by theirs. Is he to find them stunned and overwhelmed by sorrow, looking to him as if he were a magician to dispel it, or shall they prove in submission and steadfastness that his frequent lessons have been treasured in their hearts? Should not a Pastor in such a visit expect comfort as well as afford it?

Do not then put upon your minister, the burden of all your sorrows. Do not look for him always to console or strengthen or direct you. Every individual who has reached mature life should have provided some helps and refuges for his own soul. He should be able to solace himself. It is my du-

ty to devote many hours every day to study and thought. My own closet and this pulpit are the places of my peculiar labor.

When I enter your dwellings, it is indeed with the expectation of verifying or illustrating the truths which I study and teach. Very many occasions, valuable alike to you and to me, will offer themselves for testing the appropriate privileges of the Pastoral Office. Sympathy and sincerity on such occasions, and on all occasions, are the conditions of good to us both. But your own reflection will suggest to you that my office would be to me a wearing and cheerless duty, if I am to leave the labors of my study, and go from house to house, to listen only to tales of sorrow and doubt. Would either one of you consent to such a round of obligation? Remember the Apostolic injunction—"Every man shall bear his own burden." Trial is the appointed condition of human virtue. The sun shines into all our dwellings, in all the Book of everlasting truth dispenses its counsels and its hopes. The fireside duties, the social circle, the sympathies of private affection, and the larger intimacies of friendship,—these are the blessings which make the ordinary tenor of our days bright to each of us. But the moment of trial must come, and then we must not look wholly to sympathy, still less to foreign sympathy. If each of you cannot then bear his own burden, it will be because he has long been ungrateful and inconsiderate. His frame of mind has not been

strengthened, as it should have been, by the instructive teaching of his own experience, if he seek the aid of another to sustain it under its anxieties. It is the office of the Saviour alone to bear all our infirmities, to console, to counsel and to illumine our trials. It is the privilege of the disciple to cast all upon him, but it is only pusillanimity or selfishness to burden any human being with our private griefs.

Let me then comfort and sympathise with you in all your sorrows, let me do what I can to dispel your anxieties and doubts. Cheerfully and gladly will I come at your call, and even without your call, and grateful shall I be to you if by word or prayer I can make your paths of trial more easy, or confirm your hopes of eternal peace. But I earnestly entreat you so to regard my usual offices and labors that I may not be obliged to do my whole work by a death bed or by a grave. I fear not either of those scenes, which excite in many persons a trembling of the frame and an overwhelming melancholy of the soul. Death has been before me in so many shapes of unredeemed horror that I connect no startling fear with its individual blows. — Nor do I look upon its gradual approaches as if they should alarm the departing spirit of a Christian — Friends and mourners too may weep, and sympathy may wet the cheeks of those who stand around. — But let not fear nor doubt again rest upon the dust as it closes over dust, for the sting of death is taken

away from all believers. Let me be present always where the tyrant has cast his dart, but if you would have me feel that my labor has not been in vain, let me see calmness and composure, faith and hope, implanted deep by the services of God's Holy Sabbath, by an honest dealing with your own souls, by a religious experience, formed and attested by your own prayers.

Such are some of the principal reflections which suggest themselves to me in view of my yet untried office as a Pastor. Remember that if I am a Minister, I am still a man. Your own imperfections and failings attach to me. The round of continual duties will wear upon my spirits. I shall depend upon your kind constructions, upon your lenient judgement. But more than all will the success of my labors depend upon your having hearts of flesh. The labors of my study and my duties to the happy and to the afflicted, may bring their fatigue, perhaps they may be mingled with intervals of depression. But no labor will tire or dishearten me like ineffectual labor. Every instance of chilling indifference, of hardened worldliness, of heartless trifling, of dull and stupid lifelessness which I shall witness in any of you, will add a year to my life and plant a thorn in my heart. With sincerity and plainness I have spoken to you this day as in the sight of God. You were witnesses to the solemn services of the past week, which, by discourse, and prayer, and charge, and fellowship, bound so closely around me the

obligations of a fearful responsibility. Hardly has my mind yet become tranquillised from the deep anxiety, the secret emotions which then attested to me, that the recording angel was writing in his book my duty to God, to Christ and to you. But not for me alone was the great book of account then opened. In the sight of God I have acknowledged my duty, and in the sight of God I pronounce yours. And I charge you to perform it, not only as you are partners to the social relations which shall henceforth subsist between us, but as you have increased your responsibility by asking for yourselves the labors and the prayers of a minister of Jesus Christ.— I charge you before God and his holy angels that you despise not my labors, that you trifle not with my efforts, weak as they may be. My prayers for you will be bonds by which your souls shall be bound to your duty. If you break them, God will requite not me but you. With the completion of my work yours will begin. Realise these truths, think upon them, engrave them upon your hearts, and then pray to God, that as you have asked for a minister of his word and ordinances you may believe and obey the lessons which through human instrumentalities God shall write upon your souls.

I know that my own weakness will often be measured by you, with the strength of him to whose place I have succeeded. He, who is beloved and esteemed of all those who here entered into his labors, is near to us, and neither his character nor his pul-